
**1999 NPR Employee Survey
Student Financial Assistance
Improvement Strategy**

Strengths:

One of the key strengths of Student Financial Assistance (SFA) is the working relationship employees enjoy with each other. Employees report high levels of cooperation, extensive use of teamwork, supervisors who are sympathetic towards family and outside responsibilities, and open and free collaboration between management and the union. Additionally, as the first federal Performance-Based Organization (PBO), SFA is busy improving services for its customers and this has not gone unnoticed by employees. Employees are extremely cognizant of customer expectation goals and a large proportion report having electronic information at their fingertips to get the job done.

Areas Targeted for Improvement:

While many of the results are favorable, further improvement is necessary. An analysis of the survey data shows that many do not believe there are systems in place to link customer feedback to the employees who can act on it. Additionally there are key issues affecting employee morale -employees feel less involved in the decision-making process, feel they have less flexibility in their jobs and feel there is need for additional customer service training. Further SFA employees report many of the same concerns that are pervasive throughout government-- primarily those relating to administrative and human resource processes.

SFA is in the midst of reorganization, so some of these results are not surprising. However, as detailed in SFA's Five-Year Performance Plan (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/>), we are seriously committed to improving the satisfaction of our customers and employees. Here are some of the action steps we will take in this year to improve.

Immediate Action Steps:

- Maximize Feedback to Improve Customer Satisfaction

- *Conduct surveys and focus groups to determine what new products, services and improvements customers and partners want (by June 2000).*
- *Incorporate extensive customer and partner testing into our product and service development cycles (on going).*
- *Participate in numerous partnerships to address key student aid and business process initiatives (on-going).*
- *Continue to implement the SFA organizational design that is customer-centric, like the best in business (on-going).*

-Engage the Entire Organization in Performance Excellence

- *Maximize the quality of the customer and employee experience, as well as the quality of our business by developing standards for each operating unit of SFA (by September 2000).*
- *Continue and enhance SFA University with a core-curriculum for staff development. Courses include: Introduction to ED, PBO on the Front Lines, Traditions of Student Aid, and Student Aid Start to Finish. Additional courses will be offered to provide specific skill sets (on-going).*
- *Define core competencies and provide the appropriate training to close any gaps particularly in technology and customer service (on-going).*
- *Routinely measure employee satisfaction and work with employees to resolve problems and issues (on-going).*

-Relocate SFA Employees to a Better Facility

- *SFA is working with GSA to identify a suitable building. Initial negotiations have taken place and a second round is ongoing. The final lease award is expected by April 2000 with occupancy anticipated in July 2001.*

-Piggyback on Departmental Initiatives that seek to Improve Administrative Processes, such as

- *Dealing with Poor Performing Employees*
- *Streamlining the Hiring Process*
- *Simplifying Travel Management*

More about these can be found in the Department of Education's Action Plan on this Website.

Agency Commitment:

Greg Woods On Employee Satisfaction

It's hard to imagine a more satisfying job than helping to put America through school. So something's wrong when people with that great job report low satisfaction. The NPR survey says what to do about it — install customer feed back systems, provide customer service training, simplify travel and small purchases, demand respect for and performance from everyone. All that and more is on my employee satisfaction agenda for the year. I won't be satisfied until just about everybody who works here is.

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To return to the NPR Employee Survey www.employeesurvey.gov